

One possibility for widening the field of applications of this type of technology would consist in introducing recognition elements into audiovisual programmes, these elements being able to trigger the recognition operations at the desired moments. For example, a specific banner could be inserted 5 during the broadcasting of a live transmission. However, such a solution would require inlay steps, that would have to be performed by the transmitting station. This is therefore an intrusive procedure, which is rather impractical in particular when the interactivity is driven by an operator who is not involved in the broadcasting process.

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The present invention relates to a system and a method of synchronizing audiovisual programmes and interactive services, which may make it possible to be completely unintrusive with regard to broadcasters and operators of services, while permitting simple and reliable implementation 15 and avoiding recourse to a programme guide. The system and the method of the invention enable applications not only to programmes known in advance, but also to transmissions broadcast live or to programmes that have not formed the subject of a processing or of a prior examination.

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The synchronization system and method of the invention apply also to other types of synchronization relating to audiovisual programmes, in particular in respect of automatic recordings of films or transmissions, or of automatic substitutions of contents of audiovisual programmes (the user being able, for example, to decide in advance a real-time replacement on 25 screen of a certain category of programmes by another, by means of selection from among several broadcasting sources). What is more, they also relate to radio transmissions. Hereinafter, and for simplicity, including in the definition of the invention, the expression "audiovisual programme" is aimed at audio and/or video programmes.

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The subject of the invention are also units and methods for specifying and recognizing synchronization signals, usable for the

CLAIMS

1. Recognition unit (2) for recognizing synchronization signals in at least one audiovisual programme (15) received, said audiovisual programme (15) comprising an audiovisual content intended to be broadcast to users and control information, said recognition unit (2) comprising :
 - a reception module (21, 24) and a recording module (25), for receiving and recording in a storage space (20), recognition elements (11) making it possible to obtain at least one extracted portion of the content of said audiovisual programme (15),
 - a reception module (21) for receiving at least one transmitted stream carrying said audiovisual programme (15),
 - a detection module (22) for detecting said synchronization signals (11) in said audiovisual programme (15) received, by means of said recognition elements (11) stored in said storage space (20), by recognition in the content of said audiovisual programme (15) received, of said extracted portion,
 - and a transmission module (23) for transmitting action instructions (12) in case of detection of said synchronization signals in said audiovisual programme (15), said instructions (12) being designed so as to trigger at least one action,
- characterized in that the recognition unit (2) also comprises a module (26) for timeout before dispatch of said action instructions (12) by the transmission module (23).
2. Recognition unit (2) according to Claim 1, characterized in that said reception (24) and recording (25) modules for receiving and recording said recognition elements (11) are designed so as respectively to receive and record also at least one timeout lag (13) and in that the timeout module (26) is designed to use said lag (13).